

Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 SAM-01

SAJ-01 AID-20 DRC-01 /097 W

----- 119673

P 280539Z MAR 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO USIA WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0131

AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

UNCLAS HONG KONG 3467

USIAC

FOR IOR/M IEA, STATE FOR EA

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: PRESS REACTION

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL FROM HONGKONG STANDARD MARCH 28 TITLED
"TRUTH AND ENVOY MARTIN": QUOTE

1. THE NATIONAL NEWS COUNCIL, A PRIVATE GROUP PURPORTING
AN UNBIASED INTEREST IN STUDYING NATIONAL NEWS DISSEMINATION
IN THE UNITED STATES, WILL INVESTIGATE COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE
NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE, AMONG OTHERS, LODGED BY SUCH
DEFENCELESS ORGANIZATIONS AS THE US GOVERNMENT AND A MAJOR
OIL COMPANY.

2. WHILE SELF-CREATED "WATCHDOGS", UNLIKE OFFICIAL BODIES
WHICH CLAIM TO DISTRIBUTE INFORMATION WHEN IN FACT THEY
OFTEN CONTROL AND CENSOR IT, ARE NOT A DIRECT THREAT TO
FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, THE DISPUTE RAISES SOME BASIC QUESTIONS.

3. WASHINGTON'S SAIGON AMBASSADOR, GRAHAM MARTIN, ACCUSED
THE TIMES OF INACCURACY AND "GIVING COMFORT TO THE ENEMY"

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IN A REPORT BY DAVID SHIPLER, PUBLISHED IN THE STANDARD,

THAT, THIEU FORCES OFTEN VIOLATE THE CEASEFIRE ACCORDS AND THAT, AT THE LEAST, THE US HAS NOT ABIDED BY THE SPIRIT OF THE AGREEMENT.

4. WHAT IS "RESPONSIBLE", "UNBIASED", OF EVEN "ACCURATE" NEWS REPORTING, AS IN THE CASE OF WHAT IS "CONSERVATIVE", "LIBERAL", "RIGHT", "LEFT", "FASCIST", "COMMIE", IS OFTEN SIMPLY A MATTER OF WHERE A READER OR VIEWER STANDS, WHAT HE OR SHE WANTS TO BELIEVE, AND WHETHER HIS OR HER INTERESTS ARE DAMAGED, BOLSTERED OR UNAFFECTED BY AN ACCOUNT.

5. A NAME MISSPELT IS INACCURATE; BUT, THOUGH TWO AND TWO DOES MAKE FOUR, ATTACHING MORE MEANING THAN THAT TO THE ARITHMETIC OF ECONOMICS OFTEN RESULTS IN DIVERSE INTERPRETATION WHAT WOULD SEEM TO MAKE FIGURES LIE.

6. A SO-CALLED "OBJECTIVE", ATTRIBUTED REPORT, DEVOID OF OBSERVATIONS BY ITS AUTHOR, CAN OBSCURE THE "TRUTH" BY CALCULATED OR UNAVOIDABLE OMISSION AS EASILY AS A PERSONALISED ACCOUNT BY SOMEONE "TOO CLOSE" TO A STORY OR BEING "UNWITTINGLY" USED.

7. CITING PRO FORMA TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SAIGON AND VIETCONG VIOLATIONS CLAIMS DOES NOT ESTABLISH THEIR VALIDITY, YET A REPORTER'S EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT MAY EXPLAIN ONE.

8. IT IS INTERESTING THAT THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IN SAIGON REFUSED TO MEET REPORTER SHIPLER WHEN HE WAS DOING HIS STORY, THUS DEPRIVING HIM OF A "BOTH SIDES" FORMAT, AND THAT HE CHOSE TO ATTACK THE NEW YORK TIMES ON AN ARTICLE THAT HAD BEEN FILED BY SEVERAL CORRESPONDENTS BEFORE HIM.

9. BUT WITH CONGRESS DEBATING INCREASED AID CREDITS TO SOUTH VIETNAM, IT MAY HAVE BEEN AN INTELLIGENT DECISION.

10. AFTER ALL, NOT MANY OF THE TENS OF MILLIONS OF AMERICAN NEWSPAPER READERS SAW SHIPLER'S ARTICLE BUT MOST OF THEM LEARNED THROUGH THE PRESS AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA LAST WEEK THAT HE AND HIS NEWSPAPERS HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF SOMETHING LITTLE SHORT OF TREASON.

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1. SO, POSSIBLY, THE ONLY TRUTH ABOUT THE "TRUTH" OF NEWS ACCOUNTS IS THAT PEOPLE SHOULDN'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING THEY READ OR HEAR, BUT THAT, AS THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION RECOGNIZED AND PAPERS IN THE WORLD THAT ARE AS ELITE AS THEY MIGHT BE ELITIST TEND TO BELIEVE, WE SHOULD BE THANKFUL THAT IT IS FREELY AVAILABLE IN SO MANY SHADES AND FORMS.

12. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS IS SOMETHING AMBASSADOR MARTIN FINDS
MORE IRRITATING THAN REASSURING. UNQUOTE
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, INFORMATION MEDIA, PERSONAL OPINION, WAR, TREATY VIOLATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 MAR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974HONGK03467
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740067-0496
From: HONG KONG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974038/aaaaahjn.tel
Line Count: 118
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: shawdg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 JUL 2002 by elbezefj>; APPROVED <12 DEC 2002 by shawdg>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESS REACTION FOLLOWING EDITORIAL FROM HONGKONG STANDARD MARCH 28 TITLED
TAGS: PFOR, HK, VS, USIA, (MARTIN, GRAHAM)
To: USIA
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005